

THE FATHER-LEADER IMAGE: ITS ABSENCE OR DISTORTION
AND THE VOLUNTEER ARMY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As of 1 July 1973, the All-Volunteer Army is a fact, for by an act of Congress signed into law, the conscription of eligible males to serve in the United States Army became no longer mandatory. Many factors contributed to what many felt was purely a wartime measure: the obvious inequity of the draft system discriminating against the poor and untalented, the lack of need for a large standing Army in a peacetime posture, and the belief that a good professional fighting force could be recruited and maintained from eligible volunteers. To this end, to demonstrate that the profession of arms is both honorable and profitable, it is reported that the Army is spending roughly thirty-one million dollars a year with a Philadelphia advertising agency. Further, it has been estimated that as of this date, the Service has spent three hundred and nineteen dollars in advertising to win each new recruit, with a total cost of approximately twelve hundred dollars to recruit and process each new man.¹

Financial considerations aside, it is much too early to comment on the success or failure of an all-volunteer force,

¹Stuart H. Loory, "Our Volunteer Army: Some Second Thoughts," New York Times, 19 January 1974.

whether it is either adequate or proficient. Performance standards outside of actual combat effectiveness tell little. Nor have there as yet been any reliable studies and comparisons of court-martial offenses, early releases under less than honorable conditions, or amount of non-judicial punishments for any length of time prior or post 1 July 1973. Thus, as of yet it cannot be determined whether the volunteer soldier is either a more efficient fighting man or less a disciplinary problem than his former conscripted counterpart.

However, in the first six months of its existence, the Volunteer Army has produced certain statistics, perhaps indicating a trend which if not alarming certainly demands the attention of interested career Army personnel, including chaplains. The new Volunteer Army seems to be more attractive to Blacks than Whites, has less formal education among its recruits than previously, and increasingly is becoming an alternative to civil judicial action.²

There is nothing inherent in race, education or moral life that indicates that one man will be more fit for military duty or more effective in combat than another. But in all of the categories mentioned, there seems to be a common denominator, a thread linking the groups which could possibly affect their lives while in the service, and thus be of serious concern to the military. Sociologically speaking, the young Black,³ the

²Ibid.

³Burgess, Locke, and Thomas, The Family (New York: Van Nostrand, Reinhold, 1971), pp. 119-123.

high school dropout⁴, and the delinquent⁵ quite frequently have a poor image of their father as a leader. Since the Army, by reasons of authority, discipline and regimentation, is the epitome of the strong male, especially as leader, the mis-socialization of these predominant volunteers may cause extreme inner conflict, resulting in a rejection of or violent reaction to the military system. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate and re-emphasize the roles of parents in general, and the father as leader in particular, in relationship to children. Indirectly we will attempt to point out that in the absence of or confusion in these roles, many of the young soldiers in our Volunteer Army have potential seeds of conflict with the military.

⁴Patricia C. Sexton, School Policy and Issues in a Changing Society (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1971), pp. 93-98; Society Today, 2nd ed. (Del Mar, Calif.: 1973), pp. 104-108.

⁵J. A. Triers, "Delinquent Involvement and Delinquent Peers," Sociology and Social Research, no. 58 (1973), p. 31.

CHAPTER II

FAMILY RELATIONSHIP: ITS NECESSITY AND IMPACT ON THE CHILD

Healthy relationships, like good health, too often are taken for granted. Neither just happen; but rather both must be generated, nurtured, developed and protected for full enjoyment. Most people ordinarily do not hark back to childhood relationships within the family except in reverie, and in this vein regard their parents as being strict, loving, fun to be with, etc. Psychologically however, early childhood and the socialization that takes place, especially the identification and learning of roles and relationship, essentially determine the later social values a person professes in life.⁶ The family clearly is the group most responsible for teaching children basic social roles, e.g., father, leader and their values, attitudes and motivation. The emotional intensity that characterizes family relationships helps to insure that children learn the basic elements of their culture and specific social groups. The absence of proper roles or relationship either in perception or offering, or any misunderstanding can minimally cause psychological confusion, even perhaps deviance, in later life. It has been said that no one is born prejudiced,

⁶Society Today, pp. 93-110.

missocialized or deviant, but rather that these are learned, learned just as others learn to speak, to be kind to elders, to conform to social norms, etc. All are learned in childhood, primarily in their family grouping.

How a person perceives the various aspects of his home life is crucial to his behavior and life adjustment. Many techniques have been employed to study parent-child relationships. Most commonly children have been interviewed about their parents, and by general questioning, implications brought out about the roles their parents played in family relationship. Particularly responses were sought in the area of identification (incorporation of someone else's behavior) and discipline (keeping order in a group).

In family relationships, a consistent finding is that children of most ages choose the mother as the preferred parent.⁷ Generally, the mother is seen in a more favorable light than the father. She is considered friendlier, less strict, less punitive, and less threatening. The father, and his role in contrast, is viewed as more powerful, more interfering, more competent, and the major source of punishment.

Lynn on sex role identification has hypothesized that a marked difference exists between boys and girls in the identification process.⁸ For the girl, although she continues in

⁷Pearl L. Gardner, "An Analysis of Children's Attitudes Towards Fathers," Journal of General Psychology, no. 70 (1947), pp. 3-28.

⁸D. B. Lynn, "Sex Differences in Identification Development," Sociometry, no. 24 (1961), pp. 372-383.

in her identification with her mother, discovers that the female is devaluated by society and thus experiences some difficulty in identifying with the role appropriate to her sex. The young male, however, usually does not experience the same problem, for not only does he constantly have the male image before him, but his masculinity is constantly encouraged via commands and exhortations such as "Men don't cry," "Men are not afraid," etc. Boys we know, while initially preferring the mother as parent, are quickly socialized into the male world and taught to prefer the so-called virile responses, bravery, ignorance of pain, and leadership, especially as exemplified in his father. Consequently, incorporation of accepted norms proceed from both parents, though primarily from the parent of the same sex. If one parent is absent in fact or by design, substitution and compensation must be made by the other. Not always can or does the parent present respond, and thus the role of proper sex role identification is either absent or mutilated.

In an early study, it was postulated that lower class children have the most difficulty in making suitable sex role identification, and thus are more prone to psychological problems;⁹ however, Travis Hirschi contends that there is no association between the social status of the family and delinquency.¹⁰

⁹M. Raban, "Sex Role Identification in Young Children in Two Diverse Social Groups," Journal of General Psychology, no. 42 (1950), pp. 81-158.

¹⁰Travis Hirschi, Causes of Delinquency (Los Angeles: University of Los Angeles Press, 1969).

Not all discipline is necessarily vindictive punishment, for in essence it has as its purpose the establishment of right order. Yet in the father-leader child relationship, the offspring cannot perceive the reasons for this expression of authority, of power and force within the family, and thus initially an attitude of fear is generated towards the male parent. Only in time does the child perceive the relation of punishment, coercion and sanction as means of community living. While physical punishment may be more violent, it appears that psychological punishment may be more lasting. Withdrawal of parental love and affection evokes responses which are more permanently detrimental to a maturing child. Mutual trust, mutual understanding and mutual acceptance are imperative if the relationship is to be satisfying and rewarding to the child, and later beneficial to society.

In her book, The Fractured Family, Dr. Leontine Young demurs that while we have lost the family closeness, we have not lost the needs it met.¹¹ As the family structure weakens, children can only rebel against the absence of parental authority. Thus it is her contention that the family is needed more, not less, because there is no other structure among the social groups to fulfill the greatest of needs, the development of the "person."

¹¹Leontine Young, The Fractured Family (New York: McGraw Hill, 1973).

CHAPTER III

GENDER IDENTIFICATION AND THE FATHER

FIGURE AS LEADER

A father fills a variety of roles--father-leader, teacher, colleague or friend. For each of these roles, certain sets of behavior patterns seem particularly appropriate. Thus the behaviors that characterize or typify an individual permit him to fulfill one role more suitably and more adequately than others. How successfully any individual fills any or all of them depends upon the sum total of his characteristics and the requirements of the particular role.

Our culture prescribes minimal standards for the role of the father. He must provide food, clothing and shelter for his children. He is also responsible for children's behavior in public. Increasingly it is becoming apparent that this role includes emotional and psychological support for his offspring. Beyond these general role duties, specific behaviors are demanded of the modern father. He must punish his children for misbehaving. He may change diapers or babysit while the mother is shopping or out with the girls. He is expected to be supporter if not sponsor of Cub Scouts, Little League and youth groups. "Wait until your father comes home" indicates that he must be either an arbitrator among siblings or else be judge, jury and executioner of all deviant behavior that occurred in

his absence. Finally, he is the one who takes the train while mother uses the car, except when the family goes out together.

The young child depends on his father, and the father must be capable of fulfilling these needs. Different behaviors and attitudes are required at different times. As an individual, however, the father possesses personal psychological needs, most of which must be met if the parent in him is to be moderately well adjusted. However, if the demands of his parental role conflict or are incompatible with his needs as an individual, difficulties almost invariably ensue.

At the human level there is little evidence of parental or paternal instinct. There are no built-in mechanisms to guide paternal behavior, i.e., what does a father do, how does he act? How then does one develop those characteristics necessary to relate to a child emotionally and psychologically? One's own parents are probably the only persons observed intimately in parental roles. Like it or not, these serve as behavior models for role formation. It is then easy to observe that well-adjusted children depend on their parents for this successful adjustment.

Sociological studies have looked into the influence of one's own childhood and early attitudes towards parents in relationship to personal conduct, and all concur that basically parents adopted an attitude toward their children that resembled the attitude taken toward them by their parent of the same sex.¹²

¹²P. M. Symonds, The Psychology of Parent Child Relationships (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1939).

Thus a domineering father was probably dominated by his father, etc. Indirectly this occurs even when a parent deliberately seeks to avoid the misery of his own childhood, as when a parent who was rebellious as a child, by being less controlling, fosters the behavior attitude of ultra-independence in his own children.

As important as how individuals model their own behavior after perception of their parents' behavior is the often unintended or unconscious influence parents exert on the adjustment and personality of their children. This unprogrammed conduct contributes heavily in determining the kind of adults their children will be. Study after study shows the connective construct of parental behavior and successful child adjustment.¹³ Additionally, they imply if not forecast future conduct not only as parents, but as individuals in situations of authority, discipline and regimentation, all of which occur not only in the family, in society, but especially in the military.

Contrary to the beliefs of some male chauvinists, the role of leadership is neither necessary nor inherent to the male parent, although historically no known culture has ever been matriarchal.¹⁴ In his study, the psychologist Ingersoll equates leadership with the transmission of authority, and he describes four basic patterns.¹⁵ There is the matricentric, a pattern of leadership and authority in which the mother

¹³ Marian J. Radke, The Relation of Parental Authority to Children's Behavior and Attitudes (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1946).

¹⁴ Society Today, p. 277.

¹⁵ H. L. Ingersoll, "A Study of the Transmission of Authority Patterns in the Family," Journal of General Psychology, no. 38 (1949), pp. 225-302.

exercises great control (common in Black ghetto neighborhoods even today), the patricentric, in which the father ruled authoritatively (common in the late mid-European immigration wave to the United States), the balance, in which fairly equal control is had by both parents (the ideal), and the intermediate, lying midway between balance and control (the usual de facto situation). Since we are concerned primarily with the leadership role of the father figure in this study, let us consider his transmission of authority in greater depth and detail.

In the United States, as in most known societies, the male parent is usually accorded the role of leadership in the family. As we have noted previously, such a role is not inherent and must be a learned experience, learned from one's own male parent usually. Besides the learning experience and the accordance of the role by society, one important element is absolutely essential if that leadership posture is to be accepted by the children: the father himself must accept and demonstrate his role.¹⁶ Mere strength or gender are insufficient. When the leadership role is accepted by the male parent, acceptance of the father-leader follows. Some of the father behavior patterns that serve as evidence of his acceptance are Acknowledged Acceptance (he wanted the child), Direction (participates with the child), Devotion (makes rearing of the child a matter of importance), Concern (interest in the child's plans and school progress), Risk Taking (gives child loving care and protection), etc. As one can see, these and other behaviors

¹⁶Edwin Hollender, Leaders, Groups and Influence (New York: Oxford Press, 1967).

are absolutely essential in the rearing of children, essential in the sociological sense, for legally provision alone need follow the biological function.

Conversely according to Konopka, some of the paternal behavior patterns that serve as a rejection of the leadership role are: no interest in the child, no time for child, unfavorable comparison with brothers and sisters, verbal abuse, physical punishment or cruelty, expulsion from home, threat of institutionalization, excessive supervision, and finally neglect.¹⁷ Again we can observe that these characteristics are considered detrimental to effective leadership in all avenues of society, not only in the family.

None of the desirable characteristics would be present in a home without a father, and it is likely that the undesirable traits might be present in those homes with temporary substitute father figures, especially in lower class "common law" situations.¹⁸ Further, in a recent study of the effects of an absent father on deferred gratification, it was demonstrated that children with fathers were much more likely to choose delayed rewards than children without fathers.¹⁹ Delayed rewards are considered important as motivations for better life style, higher education, advanced skills, etc.

¹⁷Gisela Konopka, The Adolescent Girl in Conflict (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966).

¹⁸Symonds, Parent Child Relationships.

¹⁹Society Today, p. 108.

Symonds, in his classic work on the subject of parent child relationship, demonstrated an entirely new facet of child development in relationship to the male parent--overt rejection by the father of his leader role.²⁰ More than non-acceptance, these patterns seem to indicate a positive rejection of the role in which the male has been placed by his act in procreation. This distaste of fatherhood may be transmitted to the children in several ways. It may be similar to the rejection he himself experienced by his father. The father may enkindle in his son the hostility he felt towards his own parents. One parent may show hostility toward the child as a means of injuring the other parent. Perhaps the male parent transfers the hostility he felt towards his own brothers and sisters, or considers his own child a rival for maternal affections. Possibly he may transplant some of the feelings of hostility and rejection that he feels towards himself. Finally the father may be so narcissistic as to be incapable of loving another person wholeheartedly, and the resultant guilt may cause rejection of all paternal obligations.

Psychologically these acts of paternal rejection towards children cause initially chaos and confusion, and ultimately deep-seated roots for social non-conformity and deviance. Acting out, a tendency towards delinquency, school problems, hostility and aggression, feeling of extreme insecurity, inferiority, worthlessness, isolation, humiliation and anxiety--all are possibly, if not probably, by-products of

²⁰ Symonds, Parent Child Relationships.

parental rejection.²¹ ¹⁴ For the male offspring, either the non-acceptance or outright rejection of the father-leader role would seem to contribute most significantly to his social delinquency or unfulfillment of total life style pattern.

Pathogenic family patterns seem to be responsible for abnormal psychological development. Children are more than biological reproductions who have an inherent talent for mature growth. They learn primarily from their parents not only what life is all about, but more importantly how to live life. From the interactions of mother and father, from the intra-actions within the family itself, they not only learn the role identifications proper to their gender and its necessary characteristics, but the conduct expected of such. More, they are able to discern values, standards of choice, required behavior and expectations not only for the here and now, but especially for the future. The parent of the same sex is extremely important in role identification and assessment, and any absence, deficiency, abnormality in acceptance of the leadership role seems to have profound influence on the offspring. Especially important is the leadership role of the father as evidenced in his action and perceived by his sons.

²¹A. Pepitone and C. Wilpizeski, "Some Consequences of Experimental Rejection," Journal of Abnormal Psychology, no. 60 (1960), pp. 359-364.

CHAPTER IV

THE MILITARY: THE EPITOME OF THE STRONG FATHER-LEADER

With all due respect to the gains made by the Women's Army Corps in the number of military occupational specialties in which they may participate, the military is essentially masculine both in population and the image it projects. There is no intention in any of the military services of our country to permit women to serve in combat arms in the foreseeable future. Moreover, since the essential mission of the military is to defend the country, by force if necessary, by definition military duty implies masculinity. The Army is basically masculine in design and purpose.²²

Psychologically, of course, the Armed Forces is based upon the male role in general and the father-leader in particular. Strength, force, bravery are commonly ascribed to the male of the species, though de facto they are equally enjoyed by women. While mutually possessed, it is the male child who is constantly reminded of what it is to be a man, not to cry, not to show pain, to attempt dangerous escapades, etc., while the young girl in her socialization process is

²²"DOD Ignoring Issue of Women in Combat," Army Times, 13 February 1974, p. 8.

taught the proper mannerisms of the young lady, gentleness, demureness, etc. As constituted, the military is basically established for men, and uses the masculine mystique in its recruiting appeal: Airborne; See the World; Be a Special Man.

More, the military projects a strong father image to all its members, for it provides the basic ingredients of the male parent. It provides shelter and sustenance. It offers protection against foes (the Army takes care of its own), and it is strongly authoritarian both in manner of accomplishment and discipline. Uncle Sam, Big Daddy, Big Brother are all terms commonly used to explain the relationship between the authority structure and the common soldier, and they seem to imply the male domination in the men's accepted activities. Out of necessity, out of design, the Army has this posture, as have all the armies of known civilizations. Man has always been both the aggressor and the defender. Outside of necessity, armies have always been male constituted, male oriented and male directed. In psychological orientation, this implies the strong savor of masculinity in fact, and the strong father-leader in areas of authority and discipline.

But as we pointed out, there seems to be a strong trend in the all-volunteer Army to enlist those who had a poor conception of the father figure during their early formative years. Not by design indeed, but the very nature of volunteer demands an acceptance of all those who would otherwise qualify. The Black, the high school dropout, and the delinquent as socially distinguished classes are seemingly volunteering for military duty out of proportion to other groups. Sociologically they

seem to share a common characteristic, poor image of father as leader. The reasons are varied. The full consequences really unknown.

We have tried to show the necessity of a well-adjusted home life in the socialization of individuals and to trace the particular importance of gender identification for the purpose of role identification. Further, we have indicated what we mean by the leadership role, how it is expressed in acceptance or denial, and how a male parent expresses rejection to his heirs. Finally we have pointed out what psychologists feel can be deleterious effects upon siblings resulting from the male's non-acceptance of his role as father-leader.

The fact that many of our new troops in the Armed Forces quite possibly had no, or a distorted concept of their father as leader portends additional concern for all Army personnel. Because the Army projects the strong masculine image and a strong father-leader type of authority structure, possible conflict may result within our sociological categories. Inner confusion, resentment may later be expressed by violence, escapism, malaise, or despair. It behooves all, including chaplains, to be aware of the possible sources of these problems, to make recommendations, compensations, and to offer counsel both to the disturbed individuals and to commanders.

Everything changes. Such is the inexorable law of nature. Change, however, need not be violent or unprogrammed (at least in total effect). So faced with the facts and statistics of the apparent trend in the Volunteer Army, we

must be prepared to serve the Army and the new men with the best knowledge and understanding we have of them and their problems.

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